INTERNATIONAL

US officially leaves World Health Organization

BY SARAH DAVIS - 01/22/26 6:09 PM ET

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Organization (WHO).

President Trump initiated the removal process in an executive order on Jan. 20, 2025, the first day of his second term. He cited the organization's alleged "mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic" and "other global health crises."

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The president also complained of "unfairly onerous payments" paid by the U.S. as part of its membership in the international organization. The WHO is funded through voluntary donations and its member states' dues, which vary based on each country's population size and wealth.

The executive order contained directions to pause all U.S. funds to the WHO, reassign American contractors working for the organization and seek out other health organizations the U.S. could join instead.

In a press conference earlier this month, WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed his "hope that the U.S. will reconsider its decision and rejoin" the organization.

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Ghebreyesus called the decision a “lose-lose” situation for both the U.S. and the “rest of the world.”

“It’s not really the right decision, I want to say bluntly, because I believe that there are many things that are done through WHO that benefits the U.S., and only the WHO does, and especially the health security issues,” he said. “That’s why I say the U.S. cannot be safe without working with the WHO.”

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Trump previously attempted to pull the U.S. out of the organization during his first presidential term.

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Following the 2025 executive order, the WHO said in a statement it “regrets the announcement” and noted the U.S.’s role as a key partner and founding member of the organization.

“With the participation of the United States and other Member States, WHO has over the past 7 years implemented the largest set of reforms in its history, to transform our accountability, cost-effectiveness, and impact in countries. This work continues,” the organization said. “We hope the United States will reconsider and we look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue to maintain the partnership between the USA and WHO, for the benefit of the health and well-being of millions of people around the globe.”

In an asterisk note at the bottom of the WHO website’s member country list page, the international organization discloses that the United States expressed “its intention to withdraw from the World Health Organization, with a stated effective date of 22 January 2026.”

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“This notification is pending consideration by WHO’s governing bodies,” the note reads. “References to the United States of America within the WHO context, including any display or otherwise of its national flag or insignia, should be understood as subject to, and without prejudice to, such consideration by WHO’s governing bodies.”

On Thursday, the removal process was official.

While the WHO’s bylaws do not specify the process by which member states can leave the organization, the U.S. Congress provided terms for an America withdrawal process when it

In the 1948 joint resolution, the lawmakers stated that the "United States reserves the right to withdraw" after providing the organization with one-year notice — a rule the Trump administration has followed.

The legislation also stipulated that the U.S. must have fulfilled all of its "financial obligations" to the WHO. While a two-year congressional budget had already allocated funding to WHO into 2025, Trump's executive order required the cessation of U.S. funds to the organization.

In a document prepared and published by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service soon after Trump's executive order was issued, the office acknowledged the "uncertainty" of whether the U.S. is required to pay its dues through the end of 2025 or into 2026, given the lack of direction from the WHO and the unspecific language in the U.S. requirements.

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Covid pandemic — and since — has been too high as it is," the department said.

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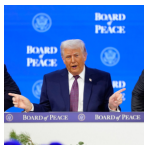

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